

Faith, vision and wisdom. The beginnings of Christ Church.

The years leading up to the Great War, which started in 1914, were boom years for Calgary. The city had grown from 11,967 in 1906 to 60,502 in 1911. Elbow Park had been annexed by the city in **1906** and Freddie Lowes, the main developer in this area, was soon selling lots.

The Diocese Of Calgary had been formed in **1888**, and Cyprian Pinkham, the first bishop, was still in office. The nearest Anglican church was St Stephens, at 1121 14th Avenue SW, but St Marks, on 33rd Ave west of 14th St, would be built in 1914.

Formal establishment of the church.

In **1911**, 40 families had the ***faith and vision*** to petition the bishop to erect a church in Elbow Park, on land donated by Fred Lowes in 1910. On **August 8th 1912**, Bishop Pinkham established the new parish and named Canon Hogbin as interim rector. That was the year of the first Calgary Stampede. The deed sets out the extent of the parish, which included Elbow Park, Glencoe, Rosevale, Rideau Park, Elboya and Britannia and was deposited with the synod Office.

Church get its name and officers elected.

On **August 15th**, an inaugural congregational meeting was held at "Lowestoft", the home of Mr and Mrs Lowes, which was beside the Elbow River at 30th Ave, with Canon Hogbin in the chair. Mr WP Hibbert was appointed Rector's Warden by Canon Hogbin. Major AG Wolley Dodd was voted People's Warden. In addition, eight vestry members were elected. Lay delegates to synod were elected later, in May. It was decided to call the new parish "Christ Church".

First vestry meeting names 1st Rector.

The first vestry meeting quickly followed, on **August 29th 1912** and asked the bishop to appoint Rev Charles Horne as the first rector. Horne took up his appointment on Dec 1st, with a minimum salary of \$100 per month.

Vestry and AGM's.

Monthly meetings of vestry followed thereafter, the first nine at "Lowestoft", then at parishioners' homes until after May'13. After that, they took place at the church. except during construction of second stage of the basement church, when they were held at the Rectory. Minutes have been preserved from the first. Annual parish meetings began in January'14, with appointment of Rector's warden, election of People's Warden, vestry and synod delegates. Annual Financial statements and reports from parish organizations were presented from that date.

Conceptual church and phased plan.

The first vestry meeting appointed the firm of Laing and Major as Architects for the new church. On **Sept 10th**, a conceptual drawing of the proposed church was presented by the architects, which would cost about \$80,000. It was decided, in spite of the boom times to start small, on a phased creation of a less ambitious church, one then estimated to eventually cost \$40,000 in current dollar value, which could later be extended.

First building phase.

The first phase would be the eastern 1/3 of the church basement, to the level of the chancel arch of the future church. This was drawn up by the architects and put out to tender. On **Oct 3rd** tenders were received and the job of constructing the building was awarded to The Swanstrom Co for \$7193, with E.M Robinson doing the electrical wiring and making the Altar. 1st building phase.

It was substantially completed by Christmas. at a cost of \$7,728. and had a capacity of 160 people. There was initially no heat, but someone donated a wood and coal stove. Natural gas was piped-in for heating in November. That first year a porch, with an electric light, was added for \$35.

Worship.

The primary purpose of a church was and remains, the worship of Almighty God. The first service was on held on January 5th 1913, Just as soon as the building was ready and before a congregation of 40-50 people. That was Morning prayer, which would have continued weekly. as the backbone of its worship life, but in February there was an evening service at 7pm.

Oct 22nd '13, the Very Rev Dean Paget of the Pro-cathedral would preach, at Harvest thanksgiving services.

Music.

What is an Anglican worship service without music.

Just after the first service, an organ was purchased from Mason and Rich for \$106.25.

The first organist and choir master, Carolyn Sells was appointed but she died in Dec'13. And the congregation helped her sister with medical expenses- \$35 towards Hospital and \$15 towards nurse.

A choir was organized, which included choir boys by that November for whom vestry minutes note that a kneeling rail made. Women and girls were not included in those early days.

Office functions.

For the newly established parish, there were essential clerical functions like handling donations to the building fund, and paying the Rector, even before the church opened. In Dec '12, someone organized insurance of \$1000 on the contents of the shortly to open church. They could not afford a secretary and this work was done by volunteers. They presumably worked from their homes, since there was no space for an office in the new church.

Publicity.

In Dec 1913, printed flyers announcing first service were distributed in Glencoe and EP and by Jan '14 notices were being published in the Saturday Herald.

Parish communications.

A Sunday service bulletin was likely soon started, which would have included some parish news. A monthly report by Rector was considered in Sept '13, but deferred

temporarily, due to cost. Mr Baltram planned a Parish magazine, which was challenging due to the reliance on volunteer work.

Weekly offerings.

The support of the congregation was essential to run the new parish. There would have been no system of paying regularly, independent of one's attendance, so collections during Sunday services were crucial. Initially, a hat would have been passed around. Pledge envelopes were printed for Thanksgiving and by Dec '13, \$ 947 had been collected.

Fundraising and the Women's auxiliary.

Publishers of *Church life* gave some money and carol singing by Miss Sells and three others, in Dec '13 also raised money.

The WA was formed in 1914 and immediately assumed great importance for fundraising. They undertook various fund-raising events, raising \$175 from a concert in May '14, featuring refreshments and sales of handiwork. In 1914, a Junior WA had been organized and it raised \$50 in December.

Financing.

With the outbreak of WWI, the economy went into recession. Thus, various mortgages and loans had to be arranged during the first few years, at interest rates around 6%, with personal guarantees by vestry members.

'Missions'.

The church's role to support the disadvantaged arose right away. In Jan 1914, \$118 had been raised for that purpose.

Basement extended.

The church must have been instantly successful, because by May '13, the Rector was calling for more space. He noted that the C of E were going to be alone in EP until next year, when St Marks was scheduled to open and "we need to hold what we have".

In **May 1914**, a special vestry meeting called for tenders for a Westerly extension to the basement. An additional 1/3 of the anticipated final basement structure, or four more bays, was added, in summer 1914 at a cost of \$6080 and completed by September. The builder was WH Cawston. It was heated by Natural Gas stoves. The walls of the whole church, were encased in brick and a tar and gravel roof added, during the next two years.

First World war.

The early leadership showed great **wisdom** in doing the building project in small steps, because in 1914, the First World War, began and the economy went into recession. The war lasted until 1918 and Christ Church would remain a basement church until **1921**.

Grounds.

The early lands comprised only the lot given by Fred Lowes; the land which we now own to the South, was obtained in the 1950, by donation and purchase.

Mention was made in the vestry minutes of clearing and levelling the grounds. The building had been constructed at the lower end of a hill, and the lot itself would

have had a gentle slope. The ground would have been covered by original prairie grass with small bushes. The hillside had been excavated and graded, to make way for 34th Ave and 8th. Some problems arose with water drainage off the hill, but 8th St would catch much of it. There were no natural trees in Elbow Park then, except down by the Elbow River. Later, in 1921, the church planted trees on the hillside above the church, to stabilize the hillside soil.

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